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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this program is to determine how to teach the four major language skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking, in an Apple Macintosh classroom environment for high school students who are non-native speakers of English. The syllabus for the course, designed for higher-intermediate students with a basic background in English grammar and vocabulary, focuses on developing academic communication skills, learning skills, knowledge in a specific content area, and skills for using a computer as a tool. The main difficulties of English grammar and vocabulary that higher-intermediate English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) students have are covered, as well as the grammar and vocabulary that usually appear in standardized tests. Course objectives include the following areas: text processing, desktop publishing, graphics, telecommunications, speech recognition and synthesis, databases, expert systems, robotics, CD-ROMs, and games. A list of the types of software selected for use in the EFL classes is provided. A table shows the range of topics, software, classroom assignments and time spent on the course. Appendices provide an outline of the syllabus and a list of topics published in an ESL newspaper and tested with the Bulgarian high school students. (AEF)

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Improve Your English with a Mac

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Key words: EFL, higher-intermediate level, school students, Macintosh, syllabus

Advanced information technology empowers effective models of teaching and learning in a classroom of nonnative speakers of English. The purpose of the project "Improve Your English with a Mac" is to determine ways for teaching the four major language skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking in an Apple Macintosh classroom environment for high school students. The syllabus for the course focuses on developing four groups of skills:

a) academic communication skills;
b) learning skills;
c) knowledge in a specific content area;
d) skills for using a computer as a tool.

Academic communication skills are viewed as an outcome of an extended background in English language. It meets the requirements for the higher-intermediate level of English language competence for nonnative speakers. The speaker has a generally effective command of the language but noticeable lapses in accuracy, comprehension and some lack of fluency. In spite of these lapses, communication in all its forms is effective on most occasions and is easily restored when difficulties arise.

Learning skills development is related to the development of an independent and autonomous approach to learning.

The content area within which the process of teaching and learning takes place has been determined by the idea that background knowledge of the country where the target language is spoken natively enriches education. In our case the students are simultaneously EFL students and students of American culture. The subject matter is primary and language learning takes place incidentally to the content learning. Here content-based EFL teaching is concerned with information about history, geography, cultural values, customs and everyday life in the USA. In general, learning about culture while learning a language is a stimulating experience for students. Teaching a foreign language through content could be organized around different models of content-based instruction. We followed the theme-based model, i.e. a content-based instruction in which selected topics provide the content for the EFL classes. The choice of the type of syllabus (content-based) and the model of instruction (theme-based) was made based on my experience as a teacher. My personal classroom observations on the stimulating and motivating role of teaching materials on American culture in studying EL were an essential reason for the decision to design a syllabus that provides students with background information about American culture, and helps them understand some of the basic values, beliefs and issues in the USA.

Development of students' skills to use a computer as a tool in studying EFL was another focus of the syllabus. Students should know how to operate a computer system and its peripherals as well as the commands necessary to use the software to produce the required outcomes in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The syllabus of the course has been designed for higher-intermediate students with a basic background in English grammar and vocabulary.

Sequencing of language skills. In designing the syllabus for the course, the fact, that learners of a foreign language can understand more language than they are able to produce was acknowledged. That was the reason to place one of the emphasis in the syllabus on receptive language skills - listening comprehension and reading, thus providing rich input in EFL learning. Situations for development of listening and reading skills were placed prior to situations requiring creative skills, i.e. writing and speaking. In this way listening and reading created the background for further language activities

based primarily on writing and speaking.

Grammar and vocabulary focus. The syllabus of the course covers the main difficulties of English grammar and vocabulary that students have at higher-intermediate level of EFL competence. It includes grammar and vocabulary that are usually tested in a variety of standardized texts, such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), ACT (American College Test), SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and Pitman ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Test .

The software selected for the course was commercially produced and legally available in Bulgaria. Its selection was based on UNESCO's recommended curriculum for computer use in a language classroom as of 1994.

1. Text Processing - to create letters and other documents, to write essays, poems
2. Desk Top Publishing - for creating newsletters, newspapers and posters
3. Graphics - to illustrate texts with ready-to-use graphics or with self-created high quality graphics
4. Communications - to use e-mail, bulletin boards and computer conferencing
5. Speech Recognition and Synthesis - to compare their pronunciation with that of a synthesized model
6. Databases - to create databases, for example, of words and their meanings, of reviewed books
7. Expert Systems - to write programs which use the rules of an expert system language, for example, a simple expert system could be written to change English nouns from singular into plural
8. Robotics - to control a robot through commands in a foreign language
9. CD ROMs - to read, listen and look for specific information
10. Games - to read, write, listen and speak

The following types of software were selected for use in the Macintosh-based EFL classes:

General Purpose Software

ClarisWorks
An integrated package used for word processing, spreadsheets, data base, graphs, telecommunications

Subject-Oriented Educational Software
Used for teaching, learning and entertainment

Macintosh Basics
For teaching how to work on the Macintosh desktop

ClarisWorks HyperTour
A tutorial how to work with a text, graphs, spreadsheets and databases in ClarisWorks

Mouse Practice
Used for skills for mouse use: point, hold, drag, click

The Writing Center (TWC)
Used for making an assignment, an outline, a first draft checklist, a final draft checklist, a final copy checklist; for writing letters, poems, greeting cards; for making templates
For writing practice

Correct Grammar
Applies state-of-the-art technology to analyze sentence structure, correct errors of grammar, punctuation, usage, style, and even spelling, and make documents easier to read. With this piece of software the user is the writer, editor, designer, illustrator, and publisher all in one.
For writing practice

HyperStudio Preview Disk: A Tour of Rwanda, Africa
Apple Macintosh software
Apple Macintosh Demo of a tool for designing multimedia programs
For reading and listening practice

Asterix and Son
Apple Macintosh CD ROM
Used for teaching EFL to speakers of French, Spanish, German, Japanese, etc.
For reading, listening and speaking practice

Teaching, Learning and Technology (TL@T)
Apple Macintosh CD ROM
Visits to three American schools of the future in Washington, New York and Indiana
For reading and listening practice

Svinga: A Zimbabwe Encyclopedia (Svinga)
Apple Macintosh CD ROM
HyperCard-based CD ROM
For reading and listening practice

American College Test
Apple Macintosh Software
A Maths, Reading and Science Reasoning Test
For reading and listening practice
For testing reading and listening skills

TOEFL
Apple Macintosh Software
For reading and listening practice
For testing reading and listening skills

Language Explorer
Apple Macintosh Software
For teaching vocabulary
Entertaining Program

Math Blaster Mystery
Apple Macintosh Software
For teaching vocabulary, higher-order thinking skills
and strategies for solving problems
Entertaining Program

Einstein Jr.'s Classroom
Apple Macintosh Software
For teaching academic vocabulary
in Maths, English, Science and Social Studies

Here is how the course objectives and outcomes were defined:

Course objectives: The goals of this course are to teach higher-intermediate students by providing:

a) an extended background in English language (reading, writing, listening and speaking);
b) access to classroom computer use (ready-made educational software, general purpose software);
c) opportunities for classroom peer communication: cooperation and competition;
d) supervised classroom learning experience.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will demonstrate a knowledge base in the following areas:

a) academic writing;
b) letter writing in English;
c) analyzing word structure;
d) contemporary life, customs and cultural values in the USA;
e) use of the potential of the Macintosh computer in reading, writing, listening and speaking;
f) use of the Macintosh computer in testing Maths skills;
g) listening techniques for the TOEFL and Pitman ESOL Tests;
h) reading techniques for the TOEFL and Pitman ESOL Tests.

The following table shows the range of topics, software, classroom assignments and time spent on the course.

Topic	Software	Assignment	Time [min] *Lab*	Room
Basic Literacy of Computer User	Macintosh Basics HyperTour Mouse Practice	Practice work on the Mac desktop. Familiarize with ClarisWorks.	*90*	
Letter Writing: The Informal Letter The Formal Letter (writing)	ClarisWorks TWC	Write a letter of complaint. Complete useful expressions for informal letters.	*30*	105

Topic	Software	Assignment	Time [min] *Lab*	Room
Poetic Writing (writing)	TWC ClarisWorks	Write limericks and illustrate them.	*30*	
Academic Writing: Essays and Reports (writing)	ClarisWorks TWC Correct Grammar	Free-writing approach Paragraph-pattern approach	*210*	30
American People Today (listening)		Listening comprehension tasks		90
College Vocabulary Skills (reading)	Language Explorer Einstein Jr.'s Classroom Math Blaster Mystery ACT	Increase your expressive vocabulary.	*210*	135
Education in the USA, Zimbabwe and Rwanda (reading)	TL@T Svinga	Find information about educational issues. Make comparisons.	*60*	60
American History and Customs (reading)		Extract information from a text.		210
Old Favorites for All Ages (speaking)		Sing a song		30
Favorite Tales and Stories (listening, reading, speaking)	Asterix and Son	Read a Story. Listen to a Story. Story-telling.	*50*	
Test Taking	TOEFL	Sit a TOEFL Test	*120*	330
Closing Ceremony				10
Total			*800*	1000

The syllabus has been developed, written, taught, rewritten and taught over a period of two years (1994-1995) and tested three times with 47 students in the Apple Macintosh Educational Center of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. The Center is located in the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics of Sofia University. Participants were students from different language high schools of Sofia, who were preparing to take college tests, such as TOEFL, SAT, ACT and Pitman ESOL Tests. They had classes on Saturdays. First, they had 90 min. of an EFL class in the Macintosh Laboratory, equipped with 8 computers connected in a local AppleLink Network which shared one printer. Next, on their schedule students had 135 min. of an EFL class in a regular classroom without access to computers. They had 45 academic hours (40 min. each) altogether, 20 in the Macintosh Laboratory and 25 in the regular classroom. In the Macintosh Laboratory students worked in pairs at one computer. They were supervised by the teacher of EFL and his assistant - a computer science specialist, who helped with installation and loading of software and advice in case of failures of hardware and software. The course "Improve Your English with a Mac" was a result of the joint efforts of Apple Computer Bulgaria, the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics of Sofia University St. Climent Ohridsky and the USIS EFL-Program. At the end of the course each participant was certified for attendance and successful completion with a certificate produced with ClarisWorks and The Writing Center.

The syllabus for the 8-week course is enclosed as Appendix A to this paper. A list of topics recommended for the essay writing topic area of the course "Improve Your English with a Mac" is enclosed as Appendix B.

We would like to illustrate two of the topics from the syllabus with the concrete assignment tasks for the students. The activity focuses on developing reading skills.

Topics:
The English Language Speaking World
General and Higher Education in the USA

Assignments:

1. Study the articles "Languages", "Education" and "Customs" from the CD ROM Svinga: A Zimbabwe Encyclopedia.
2. Visit the schools of the future in the USA and study the problem of cooperative learning thoroughly. Use the CD ROM Teaching, Learning and Technology.
3. Look for specific information on schools in Rwanda. Use demo software A Tour of Rwanda, Africa created with HyperStudio.

At the end of the activity a list of questions raised by the students within these two topics was produced by the teacher.

Questions raised by the students:

1. Why aren't we allowed to sit wherever we want? Why do we have to follow the requirement to sit on chairs in the classroom?
2. What is the difference between EFL and ESL?
3. Which are the official languages of the UN?
4. Is English the most widely used means of communication in international affairs?

5. What are the core school subjects in the USA?
6. How do students in the USA make their choice of optional and elective school subjects?
7. What is the difference between a university and a college?
8. What is the meaning of K-12?
9. What are the college entrance requirements in the USA?
10. What is the marking system in the US schools?
11. What equipment do I need to create a similar interactive program about our school?

Two main categories of writing were applied during the course:
1. Poetic Writing
2. Expository Writing

Poetic writing helps students see themselves as real authors who create literary pieces. Students write limericks - humorous five-line poems where the endings in each line are predetermined by the teacher. Next they illustrate them with suitable pictures from the folders of The Writing Center, or create their own drawings with ClarisWorks.

Here are two limericks to illustrate the language output of the students that was strongly stimulated by the pictures in the Arts Library of the Writing Center. The words ant (a), sent (a), tot (b), pot (b) and tent (a) were predetermined by the teacher for the first limerick, and eat (a), neat (a), pan (b), tan (b) and peat (a) for the second one.

The old man found an ant
In the bag his son had sent.
There was also a letter from his tot
put in a new pot.
Then he put everything under the big tent
Stanimir

When I eat
My clothes become not very neat.
And when I eat from the pan
Dad always gives me a tan
And locks me where we keep the peat.
Stanimir & Sava

When given an assignment within Expository writing students write with a focus on presenting an issue clearly to the reader. In our case students had been introduced in general to the essential functions of expository writing before they were assigned to write an essay.

Functions of Expository Writing
- to present information
- to make a series of points

- to summarize
- to raise questions
- to answer questions
- to present a particular point of view
- to persuade
- to give an opinion and back it up

The following approaches to teaching essay writing with a Mac were applied during the course:

1. The Free-Writing Approach

1.1. Home-based handwriting, pen and paper

Homework assignment:

Some American high schools have considered the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students who smoke. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Why? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions. (Write between 250 and 300 words).

1. 2. Class-based writing with ClarisWorks (word-processing)

Content and fluency first rather than quality. Once ideas are down on the page, grammatical accuracy, organization and the rest will follow.

2. The Paragraph-Pattern Approach (The Writing Center)

The Writing Center takes students through the essay writing process step-by-step - from the clarification of the assignment to the final copy checklist.

2. 1. Students type an outline of the essay they have already written. They use a checklist entitled Making an Outline. A student has simply to replace the words in the outline below with those for his/ her own essay outline.

Title

I. Opening
II. First Main Point or Idea
    A. Supporting detail
    B. More supporting detail
III. Next Main Point or Idea
    A. Supporting detail
    B. More supporting detail
    C. More supporting detail
IV. Last Main Point or Idea
    A. Supporting detail
    B. More supporting detail
    C. More supporting detail
V. Conclusion

2. 2. Students reorganize the text of the essays. They use and practice the Edit submenu options of TWC.

2. 3. They learn how to identify general and specific statements. TWC teaches them

how to construct and organize the text of the essay into paragraphs and sentences. Students produce their own draft checklists with the help of TWC Checklists. They work on the necessary grammar and syntax.

3. Students use Correct Grammar.

Persiana's essay is the text a schoolgirl typed in class using the wordprocessing potential of ClarisWorks.

Persiana's essay

I think that the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students who smoke is a very good and clever idea. The young people smoke nowadays in Bulgaria. I am not a smoker myself but most of my friends are. When we are at school in the break I see that they are afraid to take out a cigarette, because a teacher might see them. I think that everybody is free and has the right to do whatever he wants to in his life, so if somebody wants to smoke, he should be allowed to. I think that the problem is not about the smoking areas but should students be allowed to smoke. The teachers think that they are able to make from a smoker a nonsmoker. But the young people don't understand that smoking is dangerous and wrong nobody will help must believe in this, you know, when something is forbidden it is more interesting. So when there are special areas, it will be when the students hide they think that they are something less than the others, they don't feel very well in the in some offices the smokers are begged not to smoke inside the office but somewhere out. This is a good idea because they won't obstruct the other I think that the same thing will happen in the stools and universities with smoking areas. It is very important to the students to know that their opinion and choices are estimated. That makes them more confident and they don't have to prove themselves.

Persiana's final essay is to illustrate what the student produced as a result of the application of ClarisWorks, The Writing Center and Correct Grammar and without any intervention of the teacher.

Persiana's final essay

Some American high schools have considered the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for students who smoke. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Why? Develop the essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions. (Write between 250 and 300 words).
I think that the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students is a very good one. It has some advantages.

Young people smoke nowadays in Bulgaria. I am not a smoker myself but most of my friends are. When we are at school I see that they are afraid of taking out a cigarette, because a teacher might see them. If somebody wants to smoke, he should be allowed to. I think, the problem is whether students should be allowed to

smoke or not. On one hand, teachers think that they can make a non-smoker a from smoker. On the other hand, young people don't understand that smoking is wrong and dangerous. Some of them smoke just because it is forbidden. It is well-known that when something is forbidden it is more attractive and interesting. I think that everybody should be free and have the right to do whatever he wants, but to be responsible for all his actions.

When there are special smoking areas students won't hide any more where the garbage cans are. They will smoke together with their teachers and will even discuss a variety of problems with them. They will feel equal to teachers and other school staff with regard to their rights as citizens. It is very important for the students to know that the school principal, teachers and school administration respect their civil rights, opinion and choice. That will make them more confident and cooperative in the relationships with the adults.

The organization of special smoking areas in schools is a good idea and it will soon spread to stores, universities and other public places.

When schools have special smoking areas for the students smokers will not pollute the air which everybody breathes in school. If these areas are set for both students and teachers, personal communications among them will benefit from this too. The civil rights of the students will not be violated when they are given the right to smoke in a special place.

During classes based on computer use a lot of classroom interactions were observed. They could be classified in the following way:

1. "Student-student" interactions were generally task-oriented.
2. Students interacted with each other continually during the computer use.
3. Students' countenance was marked with a noticeable level of smiles.
4. In most cases students initiated the "teacher-student" interactions.
5. The teacher didn't structure the computer use activity thoroughly, she left it relatively open ended.
6. The teacher's activity during the computer use appeared mostly to be content specific, related to vocabulary and cultural differences.

Teacher's Comments

When students of EFL have access to a variety of software they begin to need a non-traditional kind of help from the teacher. This fact changes the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. The teacher is no longer "a walking library", or "a concise encyclopedia", but a sort of a guide and an advisor.

First, he draws the students' attention to the diverse potential of different pieces of software, to their pragmatic application.

Next, the teacher has more time to discuss individually with each student his/ her opinion as presented in his/ her essay or letter, for example.

Finally, his comments and help meet each particular student's needs for personal invasion into his/ her learning sphere. In this way he encourages the student for further progress in studying English considering his/ her specific knowledge base and not the one of the average student in the classroom.

The teacher does not prescribe in details the activity students must carry on in order to solve the educational task, but he only gives the assignment and the

frame (contour) of the adequate language activity of the learner and the tools for its performance.

Thus, the computer software could be regarded as a means for the student in the process of language acquisition, on one hand, and as a means for the performance of the teacher's roles, on the other hand.

This computer-assisted performance of the roles of the main subjects of the teaching/ learning processes an illustration of the student-centered process of education.

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SYLLABUS for the Course in EFL
"Improve Your English with Mac"

8 days, 45 academic hours

Lecturer: Violeta Tsoneva, Ph. D.

Assistant: Galina Dimitrova

First Day

Computer Lab

1. Practice: General Introduction to the Macintosh computer. Working on the Macintosh desktop.
Mouse Practice
Macintosh Basics
2. General Introduction to ClarisWorks and ClarisWorks HyperTour.
ClarisWorks
ClarisWorks HyperTour

English Language Lab

3. Writing: Academic Writing - General Requirements.
4. Writing: Letter Writing in English.
The Informal Letter.
The Business Letter:
Letters of Complaint.
Read and Advertisement and Write a Letter of Complaint.
5. Homework assignment: Some American high schools have considered the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students who smoke. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Why? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions. (Write between 250 and 300 words).

Second Day

Computer Lab

1. Writing:
Letter Writing
Essay Writing: (outline; first draft checklist; final draft checklist; final copy checklist).
Poetic Writing (Limericks).
The Writing Center

English Language Lab

2. Listening: People Today. The Neighborhood Cookout.
3. Reading: Increase Your Expressive Vocabulary.
4. Speaking: Old Favorites for All Ages - There's a Hole in

the Middle of the Sea.

Third Day

Computer Lab

1. Vocabulary: Improve Your Vocabulary.
Language Explorer
Einstein Jr.'s Classroom

English Language Lab

2. Listening: Listen and Fill in the Police Report.
3. Listening: People Today. Bob and Clara Olson.
4.Vocabulary: Implied Meanings. Infer the General Meanings of Sentences and the Exact Meanings of Unfamiliar Words.

Forth Day

Computer Lab

1. Reading and Listening:
Teaching, Learning and Technology -
Visits to Three American Schools of the Future (Washington, New York and Indiana)
Svinga: A Zimbabwe Encyclopedia
HyperStudio Demo
2. Math Vocabulary
Math Blaster Mystery

English Language Lab

3. Reading: Schools in the USA:
General Education.
Higher Education.
4. Reading: Complete the Sentences (Pitman ESOL Test).

Fifth Day

Computer Lab

1. Drills in Maths.
ACT

English Language Lab

2. Listening: TOEFL, Practice Test, Section 1.
3. Reading: Thanksgiving.
4. Reading: TOEFL, Practice Test, Section 3.

Sixth Day

Computer Lab

1. Introduction to Correct Grammar.

Correct Grammar

2. Writing:Essay Writing:

Some American high schools have considered the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students who smoke. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Why? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions. (Write between 250 and 300 words).

ClarisWorks

TWC

3. Check and correct your essay with Correct Grammar.

Correct Grammar

English Language Lab

4. Reading: TOEFL, Practice Test, Section 2.
5. Discussion of the Results from the TOEFL Practice Test.
6. Reading: Problem Vocabulary and Prepositions.

TOEFL, Practice Test, Section 2.

Seventh Day

Computer Lab

1. Writing:Essay Writing:

a) Chores that bore me
b) Teachers' old habits
c) How to improve our school
d) The chief problem of my home town

ClarisWorks

Correct Grammar

English Language Lab

2. Listening: A Weekend in Boston.
3. Reading: Happy Birthday, Mr. Jefferson.
4. Speaking: Old Favorites for All Ages - Hokey Pokey.

Eighth Day

Computer Lab

1. Practice Test: TOEFL.

TOEFL

English Language Lab

2. Listening, Reading and Speaking

Asterix and Son

3. Final Discussion and Closing Ceremony.

Appendix B

List of Topics Published in The ESL Newspaper, Tested with Bulgarian High School Students and Recommended for the Essay Writing Topic Area of the Course "Improve Your English with a Mac"

1. Some American high schools have considered the idea of setting aside special smoking areas for the students who smoke. Do you agree or disagree with this plan? Why? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions.

2. What lessons have we learned over the last five thousand years that will enable us to survive for the next fifty years? Develop an essay in which you explore this question.

3. Should consumers have the right to buy products (including medications) that the government considers to be unsafe? Use examples to support your ideas and opinions.

4. Think of a law that you consider to be unfair. Why do you consider it unfair? In what way would you like to see this law changed? Make it clear to your reader what the nature of the law is and how it should be rewritten (or perhaps repealed).

5. Some students would rather take home-study courses than attend formal lectures in a university. Develop an essay in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of home-study courses. Use clear examples to support your ideas and opinions.

6. Recent policy changes in the United States Armed Forces have made it possible for women to serve in combat units. Do you agree or disagree with this policy changes? Why? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions.

7. Read and think about the following saying: "Winning is everything". Do you agree with the saying? Develop an essay in which you discuss this question. Use examples to support your ideas and opinions.